

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 13288

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MPOL
SUBJECT: PRM-10 REVIEW AS IT REGARDS US-NATO STRATEGY

REF: STATE 186657

1. HOWEVER OUR EUROPEAN (INCLUDING OUR ITALIAN) INTER-LOCUTORS VIEW THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE ALLEGATIONS MADE BY THE NOVAK ARTICLES, IT IS LIKELY THAT THEY WILL AT LEAST SEE THE SUGGESTION OF A CONSIDERED CHANGE IN THE U.S. FORWARD DEFENSE STRATEGY AS EVIDENCE THAT WE HAVE BEEN THINKING THE UNTHINKABLE, THAT WE HAVE DIPPED WELL BELOW THE BOTTOM LINE OF THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE US/EUROPE COMPACT. OUR MORE SOPHISTICATED FRIENDS WILL ATTRIBUTE OUR MOTIVATION TO THE WELL-KNOWN AMERICAN PENCHANT FOR AN EXHAUSTIVE LOOK AT THE OPTIONS, EVEN THOSE THAT MAY ONLY BE ACADEMIC. OUR CRITICS (FRIENDLY AND OTHERWISE) CAN BE EXPECTED TO CHORUS A SERIES OF "I TOLD YOU SO'S". WHATEVER COURSE OF ACTION WE TAKE, IT WILL BE LARGELY AN ATTEMPT TO LIMIT THE DAMAGE.

2. WE SUSPECT THAT ANY VIGOROUS EFFORT TO GIVE THE LIE TO THE EVANS/NOVAK ALLEGATIONS WOULD SUGGEST TO MANY THAT PERHAPS WE "PROTEST TOO MUCH." MOREOVER, ATTEMPTS TO REFUTE DIRECTLY THOSE ALLEGATIONS WOULD
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ONLY SERVE TO DIGNIFY THE KIND OF IRRESPONSIBLE JOURNALISM THE ARTICLES REPRESENT. OUR PRESENT GUIDANCE IS AMPLE TO RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS WE CAN NOW FORESEE COMING FROM THE ITALIAN PRESS OR FROM THE ITALIAN FOREIGN DEFENSE AFFAIRS COMMUNITY. WE AGREE, TOO THAT THE WISE COURSE IF TO CONTINUE TREATING THE ISSUE IN LOW KEY, MATTER OF FACT TERMS. BUT IN ADDITION, WE

BELIEVE WE SHOULD, OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, WORK TO REMOVE THE INEVITABLE LINGERING UNCERTAINTITIES AMONG OUR FRIENDS AND ADVERSARIES. WE CAN BEST DO THAT, WE THINK, BY SEEKING OPPORTUNITIES IN PUBLIC UTTERANCES ON RELATED MATTERS (IN WASHINGTON, BRUSSELS AND OTHER NATO CAPITALS) TO REFER TO THE RECENT RECORD, TO THE CLEAR COMMITMENT OF THE PRESIDENT EXPRESSED AT THE NATO SUMMIT, TO THE ALLIANCE'S SUBSEQUENT WORK ON SHORT AND LONG RANGE DEFENSE IMPROVEMENTS, PLANNED INCREASES IN U.S. COMBAT STRENGTH IN EUROPE, AS EVIDENCE THAT WE REMAIN COMMITTED TO THE PRINCIPLE OF FORWARD DEFENSE. WHATEVER THE PHILOSOPHIC MERITS OF UNCERTAINTY IN CREATING DETERRENCE, PREDICTABILITY REMAINS A VITAL ELEMENT OF AN ALLIANCE. WE CAN BEST REASSURE OUR FRIENDS IN EUROPE AS TO OUR INTENTIONS BY FREQUENT AND CLEAR EXPOSITIONS OF WHAT OUR POLICY IS, AND MOST IMPORTANT, BY MATCHING WORDS WITH ACTION.HOLMES

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